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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 000674

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SUBJECT: MEXICO'S RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN (C-AL8-02836)

REF: STATE 6423

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Charles V. Barclay. Reason
: 1.4 (b),(d).

11. (S/NF) Summary: Mexican President Calderon has not/not made enhancing ties with Iran a priority of his administration notwithstanding Iran's efforts to increase its political and religious influence in the region. The Iranian Ambassador to Mexico has taken an activist role in promoting Iran's interests, but nearly all of the cooperation and agreements between Mexico and Iran are symbolic and lacking in substance. Mexico has agreed to low-profile exchanges with Iran designed to improve their bilateral relationship, but resists efforts by the Iranian ambassador to play Mexico off of the U.S. Mexico agrees with the need to maintain consistent pressure on Iran to comply with its international nuclear nonproliferation obligations but as a rule prefers to work through the IAEA. The Israelis are watching closely for any security risks associated with Iran's attempts to increase its presence in Mexico, but they also believe that Mexico's intelligence service (CISEN) has the security portion of the situation under control. End summary.

Mexican-Iranian Relations

12. (C) As part of its charm offensive in Latin America, Iran is seeking to improve its bilateral relationship with Mexico. According to Mexico's intelligence service (CISEN), the Iranian Ambassador to Mexico, Mohammed Hassan Ghadiri Alyaneh, is an activist interested in establishing science, technology and business exchanges in Mexico and possibly a new Consulate in Tijuana. CISEN also notes Iranian Embassy efforts to promote commercial links in a number of Mexican communities, particularly in the State of Durango. Mexico is responding by looking for ways to enhance cultural and educational contacts, and is also prepared to improve commercial and trade ties working within the context of applicable UN resolutions. Most statements from Mexican officials calling for increased cooperation with Iran focus on soft issues like a shared appreciation of culture and history. Concrete economic cooperation between Mexico and Iran is quite limited -- trade between the two countries is at USD 40 million, three fourths of which are Mexican exports to Iran.

13. (S/NF) The Iranian Ambassador's public statements sometimes have been problematic for Mexico -- such as quoting President Ahmadinejad's comment in 2007 that the "Zionist regime would soon end." The GOM has asked (with mixed

results) that the ambassador moderate his rhetoric. According to CISEN, the Iranian Embassy supports groups like the Movimiento Mexicano de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Irani (MMSPI), which consists of 53 Mexican leaders and social organizers. Key leaders are located in Mexico City and Torreon, Coahuila, where Mexico's only Mosque (allegedly tied to Hezbollah) is also located. Mexico's security services are concerned about Iran's influence in Mexico and its attempts to engage and influence the country's Shia Muslim population, including offering to send young Mexicans to Iran for education and training. CISEN indicated that Iranian organizations in Mexico also receive support from the Iranian Embassy in Cuba.

¶4. (S/NF) Although Iran already has established close ties with Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, a similar relationship with Mexico is unlikely because President Calderon's is significantly more focused on Mexico's relationships with Latin America, the United States, and other important economic players. Mexico recognizes that Iran has made inroads promoting its cause in Latin America but will resist any efforts to become "the third corner in a triangle" between Iran and the United States. Mexico will agree to improve relations with Iran, but only as long as the latter respects Mexico's policies.

¶5. (S/NF) CISEN has watchlisted Dr. Edgardo Ruben Assad (aka Shaykh Soheil Assad) to prohibit his future travel to Mexico because his name appears on various international terrorism watchlists linking him to the bombings in Argentina in the early 1990s. Mexican immigration honored CISEN's request to

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prevent his entry, though CISEN has no information of its own regarding his case. CISEN indicates that the Iranian Embassy continues to urge the Mexican Government to allow him back into Mexico. The Soraya Mosque in Torreon, Coahuila has petitioned to grant Assad residency status so he can serve as cultural and educational attache to the mosque. CISEN says this is the first time they have observed the Muslim community acting with such unity and harmony of purpose, and they attribute this unity to the Iranian Ambassador. Such activism enhances CISEN and the broader GOM's view of the Iranian presence in Mexico as increasingly troublesome and counterproductive to relations.

Iran and Nuclear Weapons

¶6. (C) Mexico places great importance on a diplomatic solution to Iran's non-compliance with its international obligation on nuclear issues. Mexico believes Iran is tactics of delay and deception and in a way that is inconsistent with its international obligations. The GOM supports the reaffirmation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions on Iran. However, Mexico's longstanding and robust support of sovereignty, non-interference, and self-determination at the international level prompts GOM to support, in principle, Iran's right to develop a nuclear energy program. Iranian officials appear to understand Mexico's sensitivities on these issues and strives to frames its case for Mexican support for Iran's nuclear program invoking these principles. The Iranian Ambassador himself said that, because Mexico spoke out against U.S. intervention in Iraq, he expects that Mexico will maintain that commitment to non-intervention in the future.

Israeli's Influence in Containing Iranian Influence

¶7. (S/NF) Israel monitors Iranian influence in Latin America in large measure out of concern over the Iranian role in the attacks on its Embassy and a Jewish community center in Argentina in the early 1990s. The Israeli Embassy has expressed confidence in CISEN's handle on security issues

related to the increased Iranian presence in Mexico. The Israelis worry thought that Iran's increasing influence in Latin America could provide it a beachhead or network for future nefarious activities targeting Israel or its allies in the region. To their view, Iranian Ambassador to Mexico's bold approach has proven mistake-ridden. It also appears to have contributed to a backlash, drawing the attention of Mexican officials to the Iranian Ambassador and to Iranian activities in Mexico and causing some Mexican Muslims to shy away from associating with him out of fear that his presence and activities will do more harm than good.

Comment

18. (S/NF) The GOM has agreed to low profile exchanges with Iran as part of its broader foreign policy to establish and maintain friendly relations with all countries. However, Mexico is also sensitive to Iran's geo-strategic goals in the hemisphere and appears concerned about the Iranian Ambassador's antics. Mexican relations with Iran remain largely symbolic. Nevertheless, Iran continues to seek deeper ties -- even if they are merely symbolic -- given the importance it assigns to establishing a presence on the U.S. border. Mexican authorities, especially CISEN, track potential Iranian related security concerns closely, keeping an eye out for any undesirable Iranian activities or persons. Despite all the talk of sovereignty and self-determination, GOM will not want to be held responsible for any nefarious Iranian activities within its borders or in neighboring countries. Mexico is committed to working with the international community to blunt an Iranian nuclear weapons program, but also is wary about becoming a pawn used by either side in the evolving dispute.

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